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**U.S. WELCOMES AUSTRALIAN FOREST
AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE**

The United States welcomes the announcement today by the Government of Australia regarding the establishment of a new Global Initiative on Forests and Climate. This ambitious initiative presents an important opportunity to help save the world's forests and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Australia will engage key countries and international organizations in the initiative to support new forest planting, limit destruction of the world's remaining forests, and promote sustainable forest management.

Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky praised the announcement, adding, "The U.S. particularly welcomes this initiative's emphasis on building technical capacity in developing countries; strengthening regulatory and legal protections for forests; promoting the sustainable use of forest resources; and diversifying the economic base of forest dependent communities. The United States looks forward to working with Australia on this proposal."

The United States has also made the protection of forests a high priority. Under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, the United States has forgiven over \$135 million in debt from 11 countries to protect 20 million hectares (50 million acres) of important forests around the world. In addition, as part of the President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging, the U.S. has worked bilaterally with a broad range of countries to promote sustainable forest management and combat illegal logging - most recently in a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia.

Almost 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from clearing the world's forests - second only to emissions from burning fossil fuels to produce electricity, and more than all of the world's emissions from transport. Globally, more than 4.4 million trees are removed every day or 1.6 billion trees each year - almost 1 billion of which are not replaced. Australia's initiative will commit more than USD \$160 million to support new forest planting; limit destruction of the world's remaining forests; promote sustainable forest management; and encourage contributions from other countries.

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